

# *New Research on an Old Collection: Studies of the Philippine Expedition (“Guthe”) Collection of the Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan*



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THE ARTICLES IN THIS SPECIAL SECTION of *Asian Perspectives* report on new research on several subsets of the Philippine Expedition or “Guthe” Collection of the Asian Division of the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology. The collection derives from archaeological research conducted in the Philippines in the early part of the last century, from 1922 to 1925. For more than 80 years, scholars from the Philippines, China, Japan, Europe, and North America have visited the collection to study the materials and ask new questions about the Southeast Asian past. The articles here continue this trajectory, presenting recent research on early modern trade in blue on white porcelains (Li); technological style and the classification of large stoneware dragon jars, the cargo containers of the second millennium Asian trade (Dueppen); the cultural context of cranial deformation in the southern Philippines (Clark); and a sourcing study of indigenous earthenware ceramics using instrumental neutron activation (Yao). In this article, I provide some background to these studies in an introduction to the Philippine Expedition and the remarkable museum collection that it generated.

## THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PHILIPPINE EXPEDITION

Like many early archaeological projects around the world, the history of the University of Michigan’s Philippine Expedition Collection is a part of the history of colonialism, specifically U.S. colonialism in the Philippines. The expedition, conducted by Carl Eugen Guthe (1893–1974; Fig. 1) from 1922 to 1925, was the inspiration of Dean Conant Worcester (1866–1924). Worcester had first traveled to the Philippines in 1887 as an undergraduate participant in a research expedition directed by University of Michigan zoologist Joseph Seal Steere. Fascinated by highland “tribal” communities of the southern Philippines, he revisited the region for a two-year expedition in 1890 under the auspices of the Minnesota Academy of Natural Sciences, before

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Fig. 1. Carl Eugen Guthe (Guthe Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan).

returning to Michigan as an instructor of zoology in 1893 (Hutterer 1978:131). In 1898, Worcester published his influential book *The Philippine Islands and their People* and, when the Philippines became a colony of the United States in 1898, Worcester was considered one of the country's few experts on the region. He served on the first and second Philippine Commissions from 1898 to 1900 and was appointed as Secretary of the Interior of the colonial government in 1901, a position he held until 1913.

During his controversial thirteen-year tenure as Secretary (see Sullivan 1991), Worcester merged his administrative responsibilities for the region's tribal populations with a fascination for photography. He traveled through the archipelago with a photographic team that took thousands of images of Philippine peoples, colonial ventures,

landscapes, and material culture (Sinopoli and Fogelin 1998).<sup>1</sup> In his travels, Worcester also collected ethnographic materials and some archaeological artifacts (mostly Chinese and Southeast Asian trade ceramics).

In 1913, Worcester resigned his position as Secretary of the Interior. He remained in the Philippines until his death in 1924, serving as the vice president and general manager of the New York–based American–Philippine Company, and as manager of the Visayan Refining Company’s coconut oil factory in Cebu (Mojares 1985:2; Sullivan 1991). In the early 1920s, Worcester approached Horace H. Rackham, president of the University of Michigan, and proposed that the university undertake a large-scale archaeological expedition in the Philippines. Worcester agreed to provide financial and logistical support to the expedition, including laboratory space at the Refining Company and the use of his yacht, the *Anne W. Day*.

The University of Michigan, which by then had a long history of involvement in the region, invited Carl Eugen Guthe to direct the expedition. Guthe had received a Ph.D. in archaeology from Harvard in 1917, specializing in the archaeology of the Americas and working at Pecos Pueblo in New Mexico with A.V. Kidder. He had no formal training in Asian Archaeology, but in addition to being one of a small number of archaeology Ph.D.s in the country at the time, he had also been a University of Michigan undergraduate, whose name was known to Worcester.

Guthe agreed to direct the expedition on the understanding that the university would establish a Museum of Anthropology and found an academic Department of Anthropology. These goals sustained Guthe throughout his fieldwork. Indeed, on May 31, 1923 he wrote the following to Alexander Ruthven, director of the university’s new Exhibit Museums, which included the Museum of Anthropology:

It is the vision of what that Department of Anthropology at the University of Michigan can be and will be, if I have a chance—which helps me keep a stiff upper lip out here, when I get so damned sick of Chinese busted vessels that I’d like to chuck the whole bunch into the ocean! (Guthe papers, Box 2, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan)

Despite his lack of experience in Asian archaeology, Guthe undertook the expedition with the specific research goal in mind “of gathering additional data upon [*sic*] the commercial relations between the Filipinos and Asiatic civilizations” (Guthe 1929:79) before the period of U.S. colonization. He arrived in the Philippines on October 21, 1922 and departed on May 18, 1925. Over the course of the two and a half year expedition, he undertook more than two dozen field trips lasting from a few weeks to several months. In these trips, he explored much of the southern part of the Philippine archipelago using Worcester’s yacht as his home base. He conducted additional excavations on Cebu where he maintained his laboratory. Guthe built his research on Worcester’s earlier collections and his extensive knowledge of the region (a portion of Worcester’s collections were also shipped to the University of Michigan and form part of the Philippine Expedition Collection).

In addition to his own excavations at dozens of archaeological sites, Guthe sponsored several individual “agents,” whom he trained in archaeological recovery techniques. These agents acquired materials from sites on the islands of Siquijor, Cebu, Bohol, and Jolo. By the end of the expedition, materials had been recovered from 542 archaeological sites—158 documented by Guthe and the remaining 384 by his agents (Fig. 2) (Guthe 1929:70).

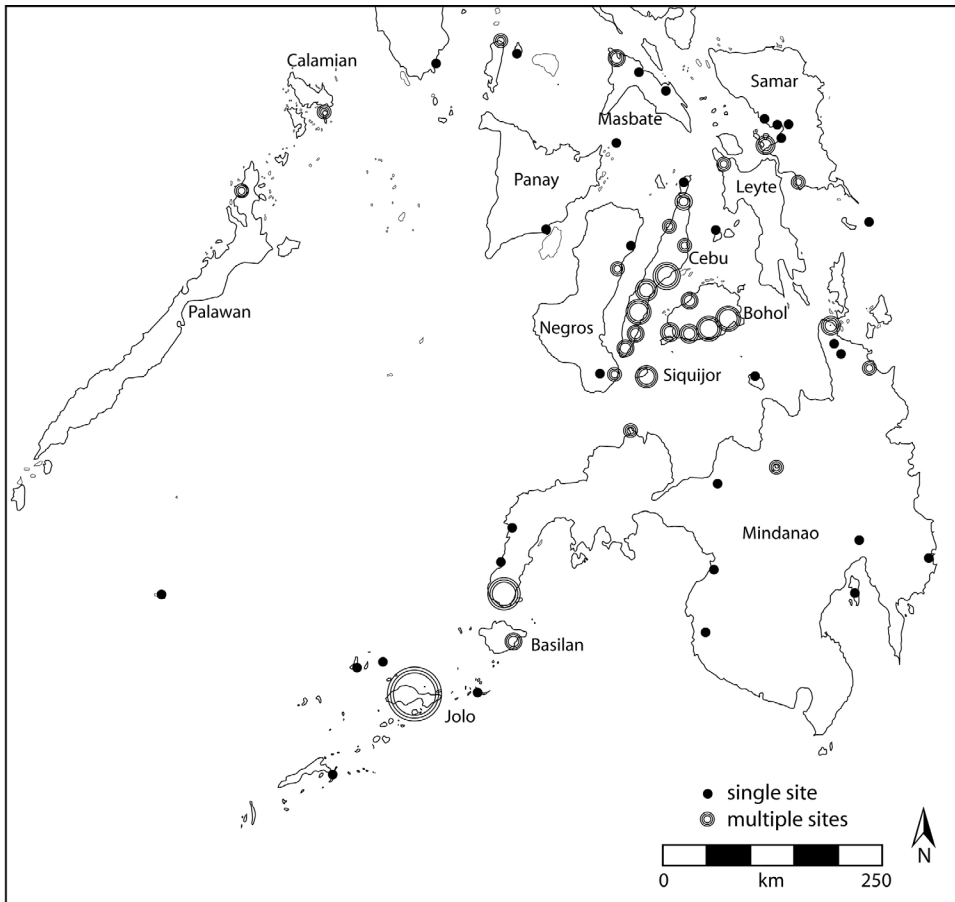


Fig. 2. Locations of sites documented by the University of Michigan Philippine Expedition (after Guthe's map in the Asian Division files, Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan).

The majority of the sites recorded by the expedition were burial sites. Guthe divided the sites into three major categories: isolated graves (“G,”  $n = 231$ ); burial grounds containing multiple inhumations (“B,”  $n = 134$ ); and caves, which also typically contained multiple burials (“C,”  $n = 99$ ). Two other site categories were also noted: miscellaneous non-mortuary sites (“M,”  $n = 35$ ) (including an ancient gold mining locale), and “doubtful” sites (“X,”  $n = 43$ ), for which data were “incomplete, obscure, or quite impossible” (Guthe 1927:81). Cataloging of all recovered materials took place in Guthe’s field laboratory (see Figure 3). Objects were labeled by site designation and object number (e.g., B6-1 stood for Burial Ground 6, Object 1) and object descriptions entered into a field catalog. Materials from 485 sites (Solheim 1964:79) were shipped to the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology, along with Guthe’s field notes and object catalog. Guthe’s records suggest that he took numerous photographs of sites and artifacts. Some of these are curated in the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library, but others were likely lost in the house fire that devastated the family home in 1959 (Phil Guthe, personal communications).



Fig. 3. Guthe's field laboratory at the Visayan Refining Company, Cebu (Guthe Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan).

Recently however, the family located Guthe's slightly charred personal journal from the expedition, which is now also in the Bentley Historical Library.

The Guthe collection is remarkably well documented for an early twentieth-century Southeast Asian collection, with the vast majority of objects provenienced to site and island. Even so, the nature and quality of available documentation for individual sites varies widely. Guthe documented the sites that he visited or excavated himself in the greatest detail, with sketch plans and relatively detailed descriptions of setting, excavation techniques (including screening at some sites, a technique rarely applied at the time; Fig. 4), and materials recovered. Descriptions of sites documented by Guthe's agents were typically much more cursory.

For example, Guthe documented Burial Ground 6 (Bulacao, Cebu) as follows:

*Site:* on a hilltop, just to the east of the Bulacao River, in a cornfield 3/4 km northwest of the main Argao road, leaving the road at a point about seven and a half km southwest of the wharf at Cebu.

*Description:* The cornfield runs over the top of the hill. The very highest part of the hill is further west. The grave found was just on the east side of the ridge.

*Grave:* In the top of the grave parts of two bowls broken with spear head and bones just under them. Grave is a round hole in white marl, obviously secondary burial.

White marl is overlain by 20–25 cm dark earth and upper jars are 30 cm below the surface. The hole is slightly elliptical measuring 31 × 27 cm. It is on the side of the hill, almost the top, side facing S.E. The bottom of the hole was 47 cm below the surface and 25 cm below the level of the uppermost dish.

(Grave specimens are B 6-1 to B 6-10 inclusive.)



Fig. 4. Excavations at an unknown cave site (Guthe Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan).

There were fragments of six vessels in the grave and two iron implements. Some of the teeth were saved. None of the vessels was complete. The breaks on some were apparently fresh, though it was obvious they had not been disturbed. The long bones were near the top, and had to be broken to get into the hole. The bones had all the appearance of being old. The skull was pretty well broken and incomplete. The skeleton as a whole was incomplete, ribs, toe and foot bones and pelvis missing. The skull had apparently disintegrated before reburial. Loose teeth fallen out of the upper jaw were around. There

was very little earth around the bones and vessels, and that was soft enough to handle with fingers. Apparently burial hole was filled without dirt, and then covered.

*Informant:* Visited by CEG and Juan Abella, January 11, 1923.

(unpublished field notes, Asia Division, Museum of Anthropology)

The notes go on to describe additional complete ceramic vessels obtained by Guthe from Juan Abella's home that were said to be collected from the same hill as the burial. They were also designated as belonging to Burial 6 (B6-15 to B6-17).<sup>2</sup> For sites not visited by Guthe, records are often quite brief. For example, Cave 25 on Cebu is simply described as "merely a cave" yielding "two unbroken native jars," with the note that Juan Abella's son-in-law "brought the stuff to the lab on March 14, 1923" (unpublished field notes, Asian Division, Museum of Anthropology).

While the Guthe Collection and associated documentation are indisputably remarkable for the period, we nonetheless should not overstate its completeness. Since Guthe's interests primarily lay in collecting tradewares, it is apparent that earthenwares were less likely to be systematically collected than imported stonewares and porcelains. Indeed, in his field notes for Cave 13, a site with no non-local ceramics, Guthe wrote that "only those sherds of native ware were saved which could give information"; these saved materials included all fragments of burial jars and all incised and decorated sherds (Solheim 2002:3; unpublished field notes, Asian Division, Museum of Anthropology). He also noted that this cave contained skeletal remains of numerous individuals, only a small number of which were retained. Despite its limitations, the collection is nonetheless impressive in its breadth, including East and Southeast Asian tradewares, local earthenwares, metal, stone, and shell objects, and human remains. In addition, there is no evidence of a bias toward whole pots, as the collection includes numerous broken fragments, suggesting that, unlike many of his archaeological contemporaries (and later looters in the area), Guthe was not privileging complete or beautiful objects. Greater uncertainty exists for those materials procured by Guthe's agents. Despite its clear limitations, the collection is remarkable in the sheer number of sites explored, the detailed provenience information available, the breadth of materials collected, and because it was made several decades before extensive looting of archaeological sites had become widespread across Southeast Asia.

#### THE COLLECTION

When Guthe's fieldwork ended, materials from 485 sites were packed into 285 shipping crates and shipped to the University of Michigan.<sup>3</sup> Guthe also relocated to Ann Arbor and took up his long-promised post as the first Director of the Museum of Anthropology, and became the first Chair of the Department of Anthropology at the university in 1928.<sup>4</sup> The collection of approximately 13,000 discrete objects was catalogued into the Museum's "Oriental" Division under some 5300 catalog numbers. Included are 3732 glass, shell, and stone beads (studied by Bridges 2000), 76 iron implements (Dizon 1985, 1987), 83 shell bracelets (Pratt 1955; Shepherd 1942), c. 100 other objects (including gold, copper/bronze, and wooden objects), and fragmentary and complete remains of approximately 8000 ceramic vessels. In addition, the collection includes some 500 skeletal elements, including the crania discussed by Clark (this volume) and numerous human teeth, including a number of modified and gold-decorated teeth (Guthe 1935; Zumbroich 2009; Zumbroich and Salvador-Amores 2009).

Guthe himself published relatively little on the Philippine Expedition (Guthe 1927, 1929, 1935, 1938) and left the University of Michigan in 1944. Nonetheless, the collection became well known to the scholars of Asian trade ceramics thanks in large part to the pioneering scholarship of Kamer Aga-Oglu, curator of the collection from the 1940s to 1973. She was largely responsible for organizing the collection and published a series of important articles on East Asian tradewares (Aga-Oglu 1946, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1954, 1955, 1958, 1961, 1963).

Anthropological archaeologists were introduced to the collection through the important research of William Solheim, who conducted the first study of the indigenous earthenware ceramics in the collection in the 1950s (Solheim 1964, 2002). More recently, Gunn and Graves (1995) have used Guthe Collection data in a new study of Philippine ceramic chronologies; historical archaeologist Russell Skowronek has examined European ceramics in the collection in his consideration of colonial economies of the Spanish Philippines (Skowronek 1997, 1998), and two sourcing studies have been conducted of large stoneware jars (Grave and Maccheroni 2009; Maccheroni 2006; Sinopoli et al. 2006). Numerous other studies have been conducted, including several ongoing projects that should soon yield publications.

The articles in this volume are a continuation of the long tradition of new studies of the Guthe Collection. Jamie Clark examined 53 crania collected from some 20 sites distributed throughout the southern and central Philippines. She is interested in the ethnographically and historically documented practice of cranial deformation, particularly in its occurrence over space and time in association with different gender and status groups. Nearly half of the crania in the Guthe Collection exhibited deformation, with an additional eight having been possibly subject to deliberate deformation. Spatial distributions confirm earlier ethnographic and historic reports that cranial deformation was most common in the Visayan Islands, particularly Samar and Tablas. However, her data show no clear linkage between the practice of cranial deformation and elite status, as has been previously suggested.

Alice Yao reports on a pilot study of earthenware ceramics in the collection from Cebu, Bohol, and Siquijor in the Visayan region, with an interest in examining both local technologies and local interactions. She conducted instrumental neutron activation analysis on 24 vessels deriving from 6 sites. In the absence of an elemental library and evidence from clay sources, Yao focused on identifying broad compositional groupings within the sample. Multiple groups were identified, along with some evidence that non-locally produced earthenwares were consumed and deposited in mortuary contexts alongside exotic tradewares. Given her small sample size, her conclusions are tentative, but point to the potential of larger scale sourcing studies of Philippine earthenwares.

Stephen Dueppen continues his earlier research on the decorated stoneware dragon jars in the Guthe Collection. Building on the technological, stylistic, and temporal groups identified in earlier work (Sinopoli et al. 2006), Dueppen examines the distribution of dragon jar types across the southern and central Philippines and by Guthe site type.

Li Min's study of blue-and-white porcelain specimens from the Guthe Collection included 720 vessels from 78 sites. Using information from recently excavated shipwrecks and kiln excavations in China, Li dated and sourced each vessel to its region of production, and used these data to examine changing patterns in the distributions and quality of tradewares in cave and burial sites between the Middle (A.D. 1465–



1522), Late Ming (A.D. 1522–1644), and early transitional (late Ming/early Qing; A.D. 1644–1683) periods. The vast majority of blue-and-white porcelains in the Guthe Collection date to the Middle and Late Ming periods, associated respectively with periods before and after Spanish engagement with the Philippines. Li's research integrates detailed understandings of the dynamics of ceramic production and political economies in China and Spanish interventions into Philippine communities and regions, in a study of changing frequencies, sources, and qualities of tradewares available to diverse Philippine communities. He argues that the decline in both quality and quantity of imported porcelains in most Late Ming period sites is evidence for the marginalization of many local Philippine communities in a period of expanding global colonial economies.

Taken together these articles address a broad range of topics and materials from an anthropological perspective. And taken together, they point to the enduring value of old museum collections for shaping our understandings of ancient Southeast Asia.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have had the honor of being the curator of the Guthe Collection since 1993. I gratefully acknowledge my predecessors, especially Kamer Aga-Oglu and Karl Hutterer, for their careful care and stewardship of this collection. Stephen Dueppen, Alice Yao, Li Min, and Jamie Clark wrote their articles while they were doctoral students at the University of Michigan. That each has now graduated and moved on to professional careers in archaeology is testimony to my tardiness in pulling their manuscripts together for publication. I thank them for their patience as well as their contributions to expanded knowledge of the collection.

#### NOTES

1. The Museum of Anthropology has published 1200 Worcester photos on CD-ROM (Sinopoli and Fogelin 1998) and has recently completed digitization of all of the glass negatives and lantern slides in our collection. Plans for dissemination via the Web or on DVD are currently under way.
2. Items B-11 through B-14 are described in the field catalog, but are not mentioned in the field notes.
3. I have not come across any information that illuminates his priorities in determining how sites were selected for shipping their content to Michigan nor what happened to the materials from the remaining 57 sites documented by Guthe.
4. In 1935, Guthe helped to found the Society for American Archaeology and created its flagship journal *American Antiquity*.

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## ABSTRACT

This article introduces recent studies on an important collection of Southeast Asian archaeological materials curated by the Asian Division of the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology. The Philippine Expedition or Guthe Collection derives from archaeological research conducted at more than 500 sites in the southern and central Philippines in the early part of the last century—from 1922 to 1925. The collection consists of some 13,000 objects from some of the earliest systematic archaeological research in Southeast Asia. For more than 80 years, scholars from the Philippines, China, Japan, Europe, and North America have visited the collection to study the materials and ask new questions about the Southeast Asian past. The articles here continue this trajectory by presenting recent research on early modern trade in blue-on-white porcelains; technological style and the classification of large stoneware dragon jars; the cultural context of cranial deformation; and a sourcing study of indigenous earthenware ceramics using instrumental neutron activation. In this article, I provide some background on the Philippine Expedition and the remarkable museum collection that it generated, as well as some of this research, which continues to mine new knowledge from this nearly century-old museum collection. **KEYWORDS:** Philippines, colonial archaeology, museum collections, Carl Guthe, Chinese porcelain, dragon jars, earthenware, cranial deformation, colonialism.